

Unleash U.S. International Broadcasting at Critical Time

Cosponsor the U.S. International Communications Reform Act – H.R. 4490

Dear Colleague:

The free flow of information and ideas is at the core of a democratic society. That is why the United States has a rich and deep history of supporting institutions like the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. Across the globe – whether it is reaching the young Iranian protesting the regime in Tehran, covering the elections in Afghanistan, or countering Russian propaganda in Eastern Europe – freedom of information is key to the success of our national security objectives. Unfortunately, we are competing with one hand tied behind our back.

Leading the U.S. Government's effort to facilitate the free flow of information worldwide is the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), an organization charged with overseeing and managing a diverse group of tax-payer funded broadcasters. Yet, U.S. broadcasting has been seriously hampered by a deeply flawed bureaucratic structure that includes a convoluted mix of six overlapping organizations without full-time leadership. Indeed, then-Secretary Hilary Clinton testified before the Foreign Affairs Committee that the **“Broadcasting Board of Governors is practically defunct in terms of its capacity to be able to tell a message around the world.”** This dysfunction has been cited by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and others.

To unleash the full potential of the U.S. communications effort, which is critically important at a time when the U.S. faces so many global challenges, this legislation places all of the U.S. broadcasters into two distinct entities with clear missions – a federal entity tasked primarily with sharing America's story by providing coverage of U.S. news and culture, and a private, nonprofit corporation (funded by federal grant) that is charged with providing uncensored local news and information to societies that lack a free media. The legislation will improve management by empowering a Chief Executive Officer in each entity to oversee day-to-day operations. And it will achieve cost savings by reducing administrative overlap and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

In addition, the bill includes provisions to:

- Define the Voice of America (VOA) mission as being a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news about the United States;
- Consolidate the non-federal broadcasting grantees (Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network) that provide uncensored local news and information to people without access to free media;
- Increase public-private partnerships to leverage available broadcasting infrastructure and reduce overall costs to the American taxpayer.
- Increase competition, oversight, and evaluation of BBG contract acquisition processes which do not comply with Federal regulations and have been cited by the Inspector General;

- Require a review of all positions within the organization and how those positions align with the refined organizational missions; and
- Improve coordination with the Department of State to ensure U.S. international broadcasts are advancing the broad foreign policy interests of the United States.

To co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Tom Hill with the House Foreign Affairs Committee at 5-5021 or Thomas.Hill@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

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